

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently amended) A method for reducing the pathogen content of a meat product, the method comprising contacting the meat product with at least one lactic acid producing microorganism, wherein the meat product is unprocessed meat, fish, shellfish, or a processed meat material, and wherein the lactic acid producing microorganism comprises a *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *Lactococcus Lactis*, or *Pediococcus acidilactici* microorganism selected from the group consisting of M35, LA45, LA51, L411, D3, and L7.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the pathogen content of the meat product after the contacting step is less than the pathogen content of the meat product before the contacting step.
3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the pathogen is an *E. coli* pathogen, a *Staphylococcus* pathogen, or a *Salmonella* pathogen.
4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the pathogen is *Salmonella typhirium*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, or *E. coli O157:H7*.
5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the unprocessed meat is beef meat, pig meat, chicken meat, turkey meat, lamb meat, deer meat, buffalo meat, alligator meat, or snake meat.
6. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the fish is salmon, catfish, trout, flounder, haddock, cod, mackerel, tuna, swordfish, shark, or squid.
7. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the shellfish is clam, scallop, mussel, oyster, abalone, lobster, shrimp, crab, or crayfish.

8. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the processed meat material is ground beef, ground turkey, ground chicken, beef sausage, pork sausage, chicken sausage, hot dogs, or bologna.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the contacting step comprises contacting the meat product with two or more lactic acid producing microorganisms.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the contacting step comprises spraying a liquid composition, spraying a dried composition, or painting a liquid composition.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the contacting step comprises applying the at least one lactic acid producing microorganism to the meat product at a concentration of about 10.<sup>sup.4</sup> cfu/gram meat product to about 10.<sup>sup.10</sup> cfu/gram meat product.

12. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the lactic acid producing microorganism comprises a *Bacillus*-microorganism, a *Bifidobacterium*-microorganism, a *Lactobacillus* microorganism, or a *Pediococcus* microorganism, or a *Streptococcus* microorganism.

13. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the lactic acid producing microorganism comprises a *Lactobacillus* microorganism.

14. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the lactic acid producing microorganism comprises a *Lactobacillus acidophilus* microorganism.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Withdrawn, Currently amended) A method for reducing the pathogen content of meat or a meat product, the method comprising: selecting an animal carcass; contacting the animal carcass with at least one lactic acid producing microorganism; and processing the animal carcass to produce meat or a meat product, and wherein the lactic acid producing microorganism comprises a Lactobacillus acidophilus, Lactococcus Lactis, or Pediococcus acidilactici microorganism selected from the group consisting of M35, LA45, LA51, L411, D3, and L7.

17. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 16, wherein the pathogen content of the meat or meat product is less than the pathogen content of the animal carcass.

18. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 16, wherein the pathogen is an *E. coli* pathogen, a *Staphylococcus* pathogen, or a *Salmonella* pathogen.

19. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 16, wherein the pathogen is *Salmonella typhirium*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, or *E. coli O157:H7*.

20. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 16, wherein the animal carcass is a cattle carcass, a pig carcass, a chicken carcass, a turkey carcass, a lamb carcass, a deer carcass, a buffalo carcass, an alligator carcass, or a snake carcass.

21. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 16, wherein the meat is beef meat, pig meat, chicken meat, turkey meat, lamb meat, deer meat, buffalo meat, alligator meat, or snake meat.

22. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 16, wherein the meat product is ground beef, ground turkey, ground chicken, beef sausage, pork sausage, chicken sausage, hot dogs, or bologna.

23. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 16, wherein the contacting step comprises contacting the animal carcass with two or more lactic acid producing microorganisms.

24. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 16, wherein the contacting step comprises spraying a liquid composition, spraying a dried composition, or painting a liquid composition.

25. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 16, wherein the contacting step comprises applying the at least one lactic acid producing microorganism to the animal carcass at a concentration of about 10<sup>sup.4</sup> cfu/gram animal carcass to about 10<sup>sup.10</sup> cfu/gram animal carcass.

26. (Withdrawn, currently amended) The method of claim 16, wherein the lactic acid producing microorganism comprises ~~a Bacillus microorganism, a Bifidobacterium microorganism, a Lactobacillus microorganism, or a Pediococcus microorganism, or a Streptococcus microorganism.~~

27. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 16, wherein the lactic acid producing microorganism comprises a Lactobacillus microorganism.

28. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 16, wherein the lactic acid producing microorganism comprises a Lactobacillus acidophilus microorganism.

29-41. (Canceled)